



National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Valley Forge National Historical Park  
PO Box 953  
Route 23 & North Gulph Road  
Valley Forge, Pennsylvania 19482

Valley Forge National Historical Park

National Park Service  
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# Valley Forge NHP Wants Your Thoughts on Concepts for the Park's Future

## Public Participation Continues to Bring Valuable Insights to Valley Forge NHP

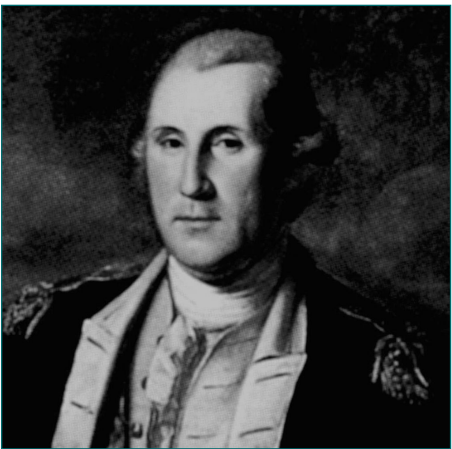
Dear Friends,

These are exciting times at Valley Forge National Historical Park. Over the past months, my staff and I have had the opportunity to meet and talk with neighbors, community members, elected officials, and many organizations about the opportunities and issues facing the park. I have been delighted and gratified by the profound interest so many of you have shown in the park and its future.

I am most excited by the potential to use the park as a classroom, study center, and research facility to bring the stories of Valley Forge and the American Revolution to people of all ages.

Great progress has been made since our first park planning open houses in October. We have taken many of the ideas and concerns we heard and organized them into a set of conceptual plans for the future of the park. This newsletter describes four concepts for the visitor experience at the park and the preservation of resources. I am most excited by the potential to use the park as a classroom, study center, and research facility to bring the stories of Valley Forge and the American Revolution to people of all ages.

Please take some time to review each concept (see the insert located in the middle of the newsletter) and give us your feedback.



You can write to us or e-mail us. We will also host two public workshops on February 26 to give you an opportunity to be personally involved in reviewing each concept and providing constructive response.

I thank you for your interest and participation so far, and look forward to your continued

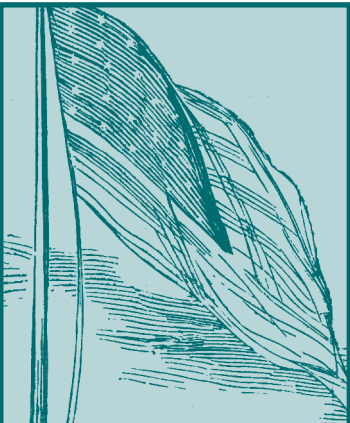
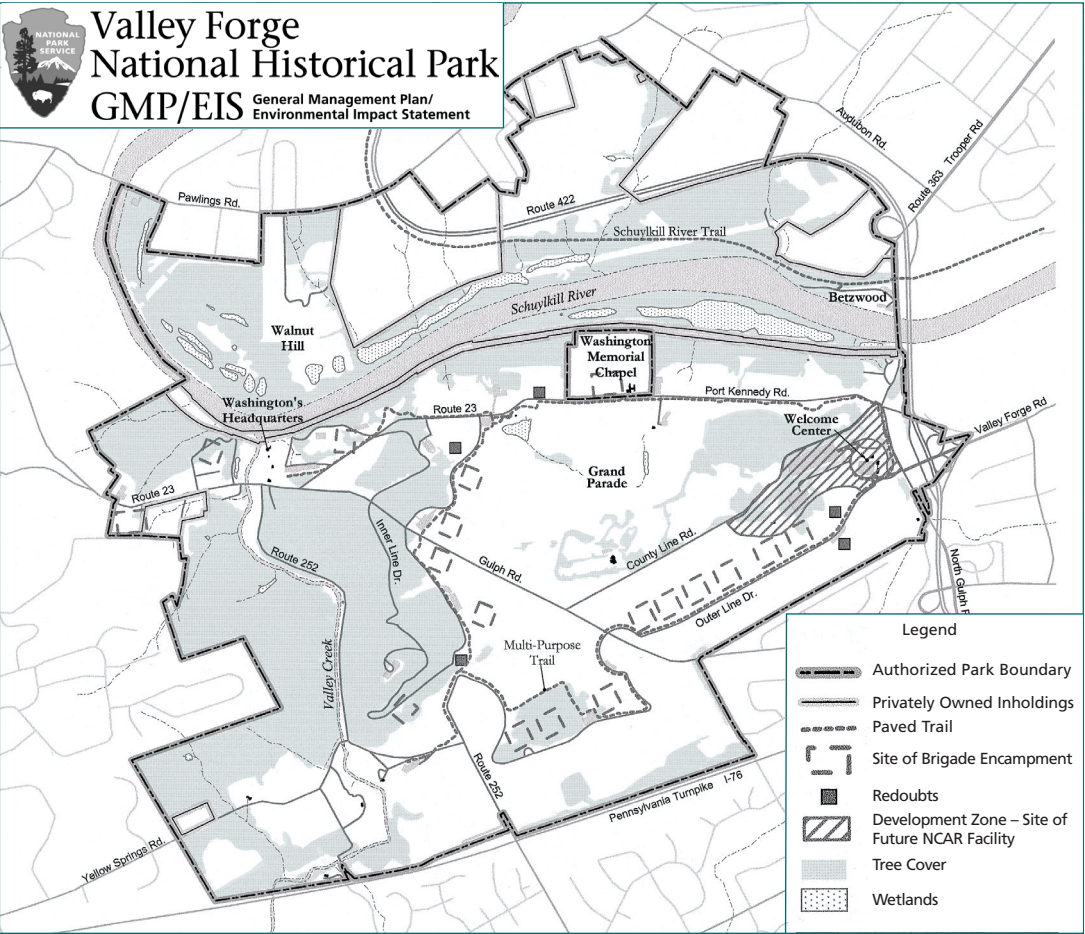
support and input in this process. Your thoughtful response is essential.

Arthur L. Stewart  
Superintendent, Valley Forge NHP

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA



Valley Forge  
National Historical Park  
GMP/EIS General Management Plan/  
Environmental Impact Statement



*You're invited*

This newsletter invites you to join in planning initiatives for Valley Forge NHP. Please come to the public workshops:

Wednesday, February 26, 2003  
3 to 5pm or 7 to 9pm  
Freedom Hall, Upper Merion Township Building, 175 West Valley Forge Road (Route 23)  
King of Prussia, PA

park in the lower lot



# Choices To Be Made about this Important Place



Photo by Scott E. Mabry Photography

Recreational users will continue to be welcomed and will be provided new services and information about the park's historic and natural significance in order to enhance their visits.

Whether you live near Valley Forge NHP, occasionally pass through, or make a once-in-a-lifetime trip, it is hard not to be captivated by a sense of wonder and reverence for this notable landscape and the great nation-building events that occurred here. These emotions are evoked by the commanding statues of the Continental Army's officers, a view of an intimate cluster of soldiers' huts, or the beauty of the rolling fields and forested hillsides. The winter is a particularly evocative time at the park, as blankets of snow lead our imaginations back to the winter encampment of 1777-78. One can envision the troops, enduring the cold, training on the Grand Parade, preparing for the imminent battles of the spring.

Because Valley Forge is a combination of nationally significant sites, events, and symbols, the U.S. Congress designated it as a national park in 1976. Now more than ever, the National Park Service (NPS) is in a position to meet not only its national responsibilities as teller and caretaker of the Valley Forge and American Revolution stories and resources, but also its regional and local responsibilities.

Through the General Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (GMP/EIS) planning process, decisions about management of the cultural and natural resources and the visitor experience will be made. As well, the Service's part-

## What We Heard From You

This fall, Valley Forge NHP reached out to stakeholders including the general public, interested individuals, local governments, organizations, and any agencies having jurisdiction by law or expertise for assistance in determining the scope of issues that will be addressed during the planning process. We provided a newsletter, news releases, public open houses, web site (go to [www.nps.gov/vafo/vafo\\_gmp](http://www.nps.gov/vafo/vafo_gmp)), and briefings for organizations that requested them to distribute information about the proposal and the GMP/EIS process. Our October public open houses attracted 140 participants. Close to 1,000 letters of comment have been received via mail and e-mail.

The overwhelming concern expressed is the need to protect the environment of the park and its surroundings. The large population of white-tailed deer, the profusion of exotic invasive plants, and the high volumes of traffic are seen as major challenges that must be addressed through the planning process.

nership with the National Center for the American Revolution (NCAR) will create a new institution that will fulfill the mission to inform the broadest possible audience about the people, events, and legacy of Valley Forge and the American Revolution. The most important goal is to create a sustainable national historic park where irreplaceable resources are protected for future generations and many users have rewarding and meaningful experiences.

The park also has value regionally and locally as a remarkable cultural, natural, recreational, and economic resource. The planning process provides the opportunity for ongoing regional conversations about traffic impacts, as well as what part the park should play in a regional recreational network. It provides the opportunity to determine what roles the Service should play in its stewardship of cultural and natural resources within the park and beyond the park's boundary. It will enable choices about differing levels of economic benefits generated by park and NCAR visitation.

Additional issues of interest to stakeholders include the types and intensities of active recreation in the park, threats of continued development around the park, interpretive use of the north side, remediation of asbestos deposition areas, the siting of the new NCAR facility, and adequate funding. For a full list of concerns expressed, please visit the park web site.



Participants at planning open houses were some of the close to 1,000 people who shared comments on their goals and concerns for the planning process.

# Valley Forge NHP / National Center for the American Revolution Partnership Initiates Interpretive and Museum Planning

Valley Forge NHP and its major partner—the National Center for the American Revolution (NCAR)—are working together to plan, construct and operate a museum and educational facility that will tell the entire story of the American Revolution. One of the many results of the partnership is the opportunity to use the latest scholarship and fresh ideas to bring the revolution alive for Americans in the 21st Century. The NCAR's board of scholars includes some of the best minds in the field of American history. The park has drawn on its longstanding relationship with the Organization of American Historians and its cadre of specialists in public history. The park is also consulting with a group of prominent landscape historians. (Please see the park website for a list of participants.)

Education is the core of the mission shared by the park and the NCAR. As the National Park System Advisory Board has reported, "Parks should be not just recreational destinations, but springboards for personal journeys of intellectual and cultural enrichment." The partnership will provide educational programming for people of all ages and levels of interest—from the afternoon visitor interested in a walking tour, to elementary school and university classes, to adult education series, to scholars. It will present Valley Forge as an integral part of a larger American story, connected to other historic sites both regionally and nationally. It will bring vibrancy to historical learning and current events by encouraging not only the exploration of the American past but also civic discussion about the American experience.

Essential to the future of the project is a set of principles that will guide decisions

about the content of the museum and the development of interpretive zones and exhibits in the park. The story of the revolution will be based on people. The centrality of the human drama in the epic birth of the U.S. will drive the visitor experience. At its heart the revolution is the story of popular protest, popular mobilization, and the determination to settle for nothing less than victory. Out of the struggle emerged a new kind of human being: the American. Visitors to the park will take away the understanding that the American Revolution is the single most important event in history of the U.S. They will realize that the story of the

revolution is relevant to America today and they will want to continue to explore its history and its legacies.

There are many ways to tell the story of the revolution. Visitors will encounter narratives that include the original words of patriots of English, Irish, German, Spanish, and Jewish descent, of loyalists, British politicians and soldiers, of American Indians, free and enslaved African Americans, and Hessians. The conflicts, contradictions, and complexities in their stories will enhance a wider understanding of America's roots. They will underscore a crucial point: it is every-

(continued on page 6)



Photo by Scott E. Mabry Photography

Education is at the core of the park's and NCAR's shared mission. The partners are committed to vibrant and provocative programming to reach all ages and interests.



# Transportation Improvements Being Considered to Serve the Park and Surrounding Communities

As described in this fall’s GMP/EIS Newsletter 1, the Valley Forge Area Transportation Planning Study (VFATPS) is a joint effort to develop a range of solutions to the traffic and transportation problems of the Valley Forge area. Some of the greatest daily commuter traffic volumes in Pennsylvania occur here. The premise of the study is that only a comprehensive approach will be effective in addressing any of the many interrelated problem spots.

The VFATPS Final Report of the Range of Options (see [www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org)), released in September, is the springboard for continued work on improvements in and around the park. The range of options as a group can benefit the park, the surrounding area, and the region as a whole.

NPS continues to work with local townships, Chester and Montgomery counties, PennDOT, and others on several immediate, interrelated initiatives. Improvements to US 422 at the eastern edge of the park between Trooper Road (PA 363) and US 202, with new access to and from the west on US 422 and at Route 23 are being studied. Coordination continues on replacing the old Betzwood Bridge without adverse impacts to the park.

Potential ways to reduce, calm or eliminate through-traffic on state highways 23, 252, County Line Road, and Gulph Road in the park will be considered as part of this GMP/EIS. The VFATPS report identified a number of strategies that are summarized in the graphic on the right. NPS, PennDOT, and the Federal Highway Administration are cooperating in the initiative to examine these options more closely, and to identify which of them are feasible for further consideration.

Traffic and transportation issues are a key part of the General Management Plan’s considerations. Park and highway officials have worked together with local officials to define:

- 1) what traffic problems impact the park and surrounding areas
- 2) what will be the future needs of the park and the new National Center for the American Revolution, as well as the surrounding communities
- 3) what transportation improvements could best address these current problems and future needs.

Undertaken as the Valley Forge Area Transportation Planning Study (VFATP), these efforts led to a series of recommendations as well as a joint commitment on how to proceed with them. The recommendations include:

A. Improve the US 422 **River Crossing Complex** as a group of projects to reduce congestion on US 422 and adjacent local roads:

- 1 Betzwood Bridge Replacement with better connections for multi-use trails
- 2 modernize the PA 23/US 422 interchange and realign N. Gulph Road
- 3 modernize the PA 363/US 422 interchange with the addition of new ramps to and from US 422 westbound
- 4 widening of US 422 and the US 422 bridge crossing the river east of PA 363.

B. Advance options (or combinations of options) to reduce traffic impacts in the park (**P Options 1-6**) to undergo further analysis and environmental and public review:

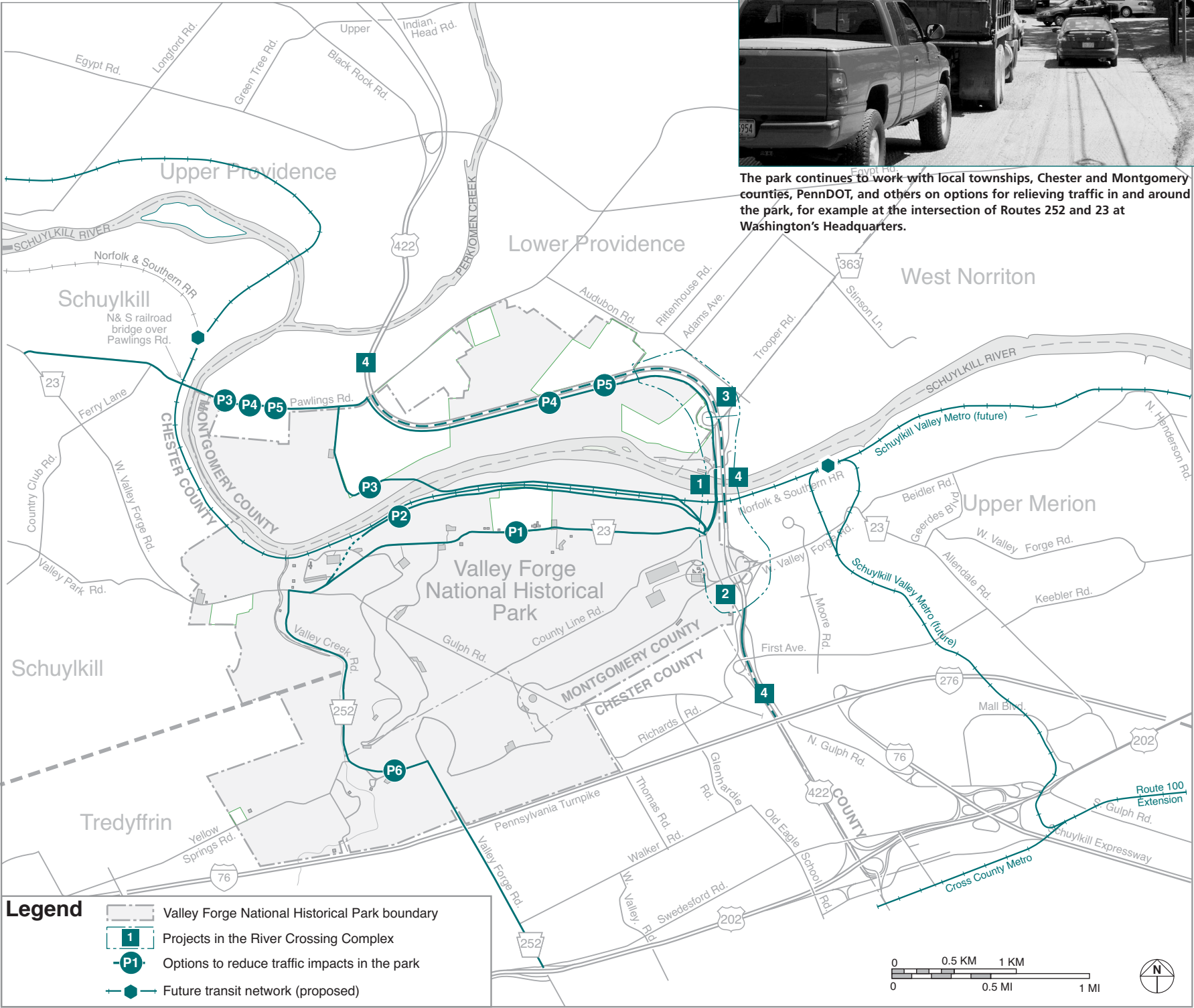
- P1 traffic “calming” and other mitigation to reduce impacts of traffic on existing PA 23.
- P2 relocation of PA 23’s through traffic to a new road along the N&S tracks and through a “cut and cover” tunnel section to reconnect with existing PA 23 just east of the intersection with PA 252.
- P3 relocation of PA 23’s through traffic to a new road along the N&S tracks for a new Schuylkill River crossing and a new connection with Pawlings Rd.
- P4 relocation of PA 23’s through traffic onto a new road parallel to US 422 for a new intersection with Pawlings Rd.
- P5 relocation of PA 23’s through traffic onto US 422 with a new interchange connecting Pawlings Rd. and US 422 eastbound.
- P6 roadway and roadside improvements along PA 252 to better protect the Valley Creek corridor as a visual and natural resource.

The relocations, which include Pawlings Road (P3, P4, and P5), would require reconstruction of the N&S railroad overpass to provide full height clearance standards (13’ 6”). Options to reduce traffic impacts also include possible closures of selected internal park roads to enhance the visitor’s experience.

- C. Strengthen near-term **transit service and marketing** to make it easier and more attractive for non-driving visitors throughout the region to get to the park.
- D. Integrate **intermodal planning** to improve connections with the region’s growing bicycle and multi-use trail network and to optimize the complementary roles of the park’s historic and recreational assets.
- E. Use **intelligent transportation system** (ITS) opportunities such as traffic monitoring and metering to provide visitors with real-time traffic information for easier trips with less delay.
- F. Outline and develop **long-term transit opportunities**, particularly in terms of connection to the future Schuylkill Valley Metro which traverses the park with a key station adjacent to the park entrance.



The park continues to work with local townships, Chester and Montgomery counties, PennDOT, and others on options for relieving traffic in and around the park, for example at the intersection of Routes 252 and 23 at Washington’s Headquarters.



Taken from VFATPS Final Report of the Range of Options



(continued from page 3)

body’s revolution. Almost every American can find relevance—and pride—in the story.

The partnership has hired the international design firm Haley Sharpe and Associates for interpretive planning and design. Robert A.M. Stern Architects of New York, and Philadelphia’s Andropogon Associates (pioneers of environmentally based landscape architecture) also are active in the planning process in order to understand how to create facilities and features in the landscape that best express the themes. The partners are committed to adaptive reuse of existing structures wherever possible and to the preservation of historic landscapes and buildings in order to educate and inform the broadest possible audience about the people, events and legacy of the American Revolution.

Information about interpretive themes and about alternatives for educational, museum and other visitor facilities, as well as historic landscape restoration and interpretive exhibits in the park, will be presented in the next issue of this newsletter, this Spring.



In a major change from current management practices, the park’s natural resources will be managed to preserve and restore their inherent environmental values, rather than solely as interpretive exhibits.

## Major Changes Proposed in Natural Resource Management

The concepts presented in this newsletter propose as a management objective that the biological resources of the park be managed to preserve and restore the natural abundances, diversities, dynamics, and distributions of native plants and animal populations within the park’s forests. This is an important and fundamental change in approach from the current (1982) GMP, under which management for natural resource values was not considered.

The proposal has come about because in the years since the first GMP was completed, we have been able to fund and carry out inventory and analysis of key species and natural systems that give us a more thorough understanding of the resources here. NPS policy also has changed in that time and now recognizes that natural resources—even in a park designated for its historical significance—are inherently important.

This objective must be reviewed by the public, other agencies, and the scientific community. If this standard is adopted as part of the Final GMP/EIS, a follow-up implementation plan will be developed. Looking ahead, the plan would deal with

at least two major impediments to implementation. The first is invasive plants. Like many woodlands in southeastern Pennsylvania, the park’s 1,300 acres of woodlands are choked by invasive vines such as oriental bittersweet and Japanese honeysuckle. Non-native invasives such as stilt grass and tree-of-heaven out-compete native species, yet provide little or no habitat value for native animals. NPS policy requires control of exotic species; the Service aggressively combats them now, but more must be done.

The second impediment is the abundance of white-tailed deer in and around the park. This past year, important studies of deer were completed in draft, and documented not only high concentrations (approximately 230 / square mile—possibly the highest concentration in the commonwealth) but also the serious impact of deer browse on forest regeneration and species composition. While both conditions seemed clear to observers, this quantification, as well as that provided by ongoing inventory and monitoring, is fundamental to the science-based approach to management that is required by federal law.



Fire back! Come to public workshops; visit the website; or return the questionnaire and let us know what you think.

## How You Can Be Involved

Public participation is essential to the success of the planning process. Your input will help the NPS learn about the concerns, issues, expectations, and desires of visitors, neighbors, interested citizens, interest groups, and others. We will share information and seek your response at key points in the process. We will communicate through newsletters such as this, news releases, public open houses, meetings, tours, and posts on the park’s web site. The schedule below summarizes the major steps in the planning process and opportunities for you to get involved. We are in step two of the process.

Please let us know your thoughts about the concepts presented in this newsletter. A comment form has been provided for your convenience. Feel free to attach additional sheets if you wish.

You can reply electronically if you prefer by logging on to the park’s web site at [www.nps.gov/vafo/vafo\\_gmp](http://www.nps.gov/vafo/vafo_gmp). All newsletters and other information are posted there.

You can also let us know your thoughts in person by attending one of two public meetings about the concepts. These will be held on Wednesday, February 26 at Freedom Hall, Upper Merion Township Building, 175 West Valley Forge Road (Route 23), King of Prussia, PA. Each workshop will start with a presentation of the concepts; then participants will break into small groups to discuss and comment on the various topics addressed in the concepts (e.g. interpretation, natural resources, traffic, etc.) The meetings will be held from 3:00 to 5:00 and from 7:00 to 9:00.

## Timeline for the GMP/EIS

Step	Stage	Planning Activity	Dates	Public Involvement Opportunities	Dates
1	Complete	Collect data; assess resources; determine issues and concerns	2000-2002	Attend public open houses and/or write to the park to share goals and concerns	Fall 2002
2	Underway	Develop alternative management concepts	Fall 2002 – Winter 2003	Attend public workshops and/or write to the park to provide review and comments on the alternative concepts	Meetings on 2/26/03; comments requested by March 7
3		Revise alternative management concepts	Winter 2003	Attend public workshops and/or write to the park to provide review and comments on the revised alternative concepts	Spring 2003
4		Develop and Publish Draft GMP/EIS	Fall 2003	Attend public meetings and/or write to the park to provide review and comments on the draft GMP/EIS	Winter 2003-04
5		Develop and Publish Final GMP/EIS	Spring 2004		

# Your Thoughts on Valley Forge National Historical Park

Please use this sheet to tell us your thoughts about the concepts presented in this newsletter. Please attach additional sheets if you wish. When you are finished, please fold this form in the middle so that the mailing address is visible, tape it, add a stamp, and drop it in the mail. You can also log on to [www.nps.gov/vafo/vafo\\_gmp](http://www.nps.gov/vafo/vafo_gmp) to fill out and send this form electronically. You may also send comments any time by e-mail to [vafo\\_gmp@nps.gov](mailto:vafo_gmp@nps.gov). We are open

to comments at any time, but for full consideration please send your comments on the concepts by March 7, 2003.

Please be aware that due to federal public disclosure requirements, the NPS must make the names and addresses of commenters public, if requested. However, you may request that your information not be released. NPS will determine whether the information may be withheld under the

Freedom of Information Act, and will honor your request to the extent allowed by law. We will make all submissions from organizations or businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses, available for public inspection. If you wish to withhold your name and/or address, you must state this prominently at the beginning of your comments. We cannot consider anonymous comments.

**What aspects of the concepts do you feel best meet the park’s mission to preserve cultural and natural resources, and why?**

**Which concept do you feel best meets the park’s and the NCAR’s mission of interpretation, and why?**

**Which of the traffic and transportation options do you feel meet the goals of reducing traffic impacts in the park while reducing traffic conflicts in the immediate region? Which of the options should be further considered?**

**What else would you like us to consider?**



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